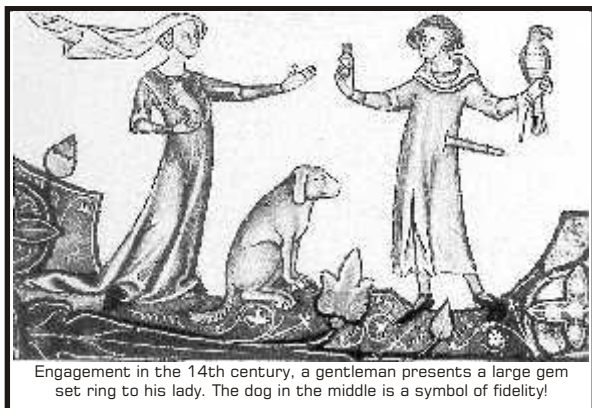


RINGS FOR LOVE AND MARRIAGE

The design and materials of the world's first engagement ring are lost in the mists of time. We do know that, as far back as 3000 BC, finger rings were used to pledge important spiritual or ceremonial events. The practice of exchanging engagement rings may have derived from the ancient custom of dividing a piece of gold or silver and giving half to each of the betrothed to seal the marriage pact. The earliest reference to wedding rings is found in Egyptian texts, which make a link between the circle, the symbol of eternity, and the finger ring. In ancient Ireland there was a custom for the man to offer the woman he was to marry a bracelet woven of human hair. Her acceptance was symbolic of their life-long link.



Engagement in the 14th century, a gentleman presents a large gem set ring to his lady. The dog in the middle is a symbol of fidelity!

Inscribing rings with terms of endearment also has a very long history. Ancient Greek betrothal rings have been unearthed with the inscription "to her who excels in virtue and prudence, but also in wisdom." Another inscription, perhaps more modern in its colloquialism, simply contained the Greek word for "Honey." In 15th century England, rings were sometimes inscribed on the outside with such phrases as "desire not others" or "all my love is yours." The rings that contained these words became known as "posies," from the French word for poetry. The phrases were often combined with images of symbolic flowers or animals resulting in highly expressive rings.



Late 16th century Gimmel Ring, engraved in German, *Was Gott zu... Nicht Scheiden* (What God hath joined, let no man tear asunder)

Pivoting double rings called Gimmel rings (from the Latin, *gemellus* meaning twin) that fit together to seem like one ring, were popular in medieval times. They often had a hidden inscription from the marriage ceremony such as "what God hath joined" or an engraved motif of clasped hands. This motif, called the *fede* (from the same root word as fidelity) was first used in ancient Rome and it remained popular throughout history. It is still seen in the *claddagh* ring in Ireland, which shows a crowned heart clasped by two hands. Queen Victoria's engagement ring from Prince Albert was a jewelled gold snake, a symbol of eternity, twined around the finger.

The tradition of wearing the engagement ring on the fourth finger of the left hand sprang from the romantic but anatomically incorrect idea that a vein ran directly from that finger to the heart. Upper class Elizabethan women wore their wedding ring on their thumbs because their other fingers were already covered, often both above and below the knuckle!

Our convention for adding a wedding band to the engagement ring is probably a more modern invention, although the use of a ring as a wedding gift is a constant throughout history. The circle is turning again as we find, more and more, that our clients are choosing marriage rings that signify both the betrothal and the final state of matrimony. If they are wearing their rings during the engagement, we may add stones to them just before the

Please join us for our 14th Anniversary Party,
Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27, 6:00-9:00 pm
featuring an exciting collection of our new designs, pearls, and antique and estate jewellery!

—Rings con't...

wedding ceremony to mark the change of status. Some couples wait until the wedding day to exchange rings. This, perhaps, is more a sign of the change in the relationships of today's couples who are often marrying later in life or are entering into second marriages. Hence they are less interested in lengthy or symbolic engagements.

Although plain or patterned metal rings have always been popular for wedding rings, there is a long tradition of using gemstones in both of these rings and especially the betrothal ring. Semiprecious stones such as lapis lazuli, cornelian and turquoise were used early on. Later, as trade routes became established other gemstones, such as sapphires, rubies, emeralds and garnets came to be used. At first they were cut in cabochon (domed top) style as faceting technology did not appear until much later. Diamonds, really synonymous with engagement rings today, were not commonly used in jewellery before 1,000 AD. At first, the crystals were set as they were found. Later, resourceful lapidaries evolved techniques for fashioning this hardest of all gems. Diamonds were originally reserved for royalty but they were soon adopted for use in wedding rings. Their durability quickly became the symbol of the permanent abiding love and fidelity of marriage. This continues today with the famous marketing phrase: "Diamonds are Forever!"

Rings that represent the commitment of two people in their life together are, perhaps, the most significant piece of jewellery they will ever own. In most cases these rings are worn day and night and become an inseparable part of the wearer. At Jewels By Design, we are privileged to be a part of such a significant event in the lives of you, our clients. We take great pleasure and pride in helping you design and create the perfect symbol of your relationship and look forward to seeing it flourish.

—What's new?

There has been a lot of excitement at Jewels By Design this summer! On a bittersweet note, Jim Turner has left us to forge out on his own, opening a shop in Morinville, Alberta. Although we miss Jim's many talents, we wish Jim & Colleen and their family all the best in what we know will be a successful enterprise.

Catherine Lepage also left to pursue her career back in Quebec City. We are very fortunate to have Margo Fearn and Jesper Jensen join Bayot and Llyn. Both Margo and Jesper come to us from busy private practice and are enjoying being part of a larger team again.

Originally from Vancouver, Margo completed the jewellery program at George Brown College, Toronto in 1980. She worked for Mike Ridding at Silverhorn in Banff, Richard Booth in Toronto and Nuth-Evans here in Calgary.

Jesper came to Canada from Denmark where he absorbed the jewellery trade at the knee of his father, a Master-Goldsmith. He then worked through his formal European-style apprenticeship to qualify as a journeyman, completing his Master's certification in 1989. He came to Canada shortly after, working for The Goldsmiths as well as doing trade work for other shops in town.

Jewels By Design has been well represented on the design award front as well. Margo, Bayot and Llyn all received awards in this summer's *Buyer's Choice Competition*. Bayot and Llyn were the only two Canadians to place in this year's *AGTA Spectrum Award*. In our next newsletter we will include more information about these winning designs.

We are busy creating wonderful new pieces for your holiday gift giving. Come in and take a look. If you have any special design ideas for the people on your list call the shop and we will be happy to make them a reality.